

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 02030 091331Z

61

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO USDOC WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1536

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

UNCLAS MONROVIA 2030

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETEL, BTRA, BPRO, LI

SUBJECT: COMSAT GENERAL PROPOSES EARTH STATION FOR LIBERIA

1. SUMMARY: COMSATE GENERAL CORP. HAS PROPOSED A JOINT VENTURE WITH GOL TO INSTALL AND OPERATE EARTH SATELLITE TELECOMMUNICATIONS STATION. THOUGH FRENCH BELIEVED TO HAVE MADE COUNTER PROPOSAL, COMSAT SHOULD BE IN LEAD. IF COMSAT SUCCESSFUL, WILL TRY OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR LIBERIA STATION SERVE AS BACK-UP FOR IVORIAN STATION AND ALSO LOOK TOWARD LINK TO SIERRA LEONE.

2. FOUR REPRESENTATIVES COMSAT GENERAL CORPORATION, 950 L'ENFANT PLAZA, S.W., WASHDC 20024 (TEL. 554-6805) PAID EXTENSIVE VISIT MONROVIA LATE MARCH, EARLY APRIL TO DISCUSS WITH GOL PROPOSAL FORM JOINT VENTURE INSTALL EARTH STATION FOR SATELLITE TELECOMMUNICATIONS. DELEGATION HEADED BY DONALD R. OWEN (DIRECTOR, TECHNICAL SERVICES), AND INCLUDED JOHN B.C. JENKINS (MANAGER, INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS), EDWARD R. SLACK (MANAGER, FINANCIAL PLANS AND PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT), AND JOHN B. GANTT (GENERAL ATTORNEY).

3. ACCORDING COMSAT REPS, PROPOSAL TO GOL IS FOR JOINT
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PAGE 02 MONROV 02030 091331Z

VENTURE WITH LIBERIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORP. (GOL OWNED

TELEPHONE COMPANY UNDER PUBLIC UTILITIES AUTHORITY) TO INSTALL AN EARTH SATELLITE TELECOMMUNICATIONS STATION. JOINT VENTURE WOULD HAVE LIMITED LIFESPAN, PASSING TO FULL GOL OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL AFTER ABOUT TEN YEARS. PROPOSAL MADE MORE ATTRACTIVE BY FACT GOL WILL NOT HAVE TO PUT UP SCARCE CAPITAL. ITS CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE IN FORM STATION SITE, OFFICE SPACE AND EXCLUSIVE FRANCHIS ON INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

4. LIBERIAN INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS NOW HANDLED BY THREE ENTITITES: LIBERIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORP., FIRESTONE'S UNITED STATES LIBERIA RADIO CORP., AND FRENCH CABLES, BUT SERVICE MOST UNSATISFACTORY. STILL, GRANTING EXCLUSIVE OVERSEAS FRANCHISE TO NEW ENTITY MAY CAUSE DIFFICULTY. WHILE FIRESTONE WOULD PROBABLY BE PLEASED TRADE RELIABLE PUBLIC SERVICE FOR ITS AGING USLRC OPERATION, FRENCH CABLE COMPANY MAY BE ANOTHER MATTER. INDEED, COMSAT REPS REPORTED THAT FRENCH HAVE COME IN AT LAST MINUTE WITH COUNTER PROPOSAL FOR EARTH STATION TO BE FINANCED UNDER SOFT TERMS AND OPERATED BY FRENCH CABLES. WHILE COMSAT APPEARS HAVE INSIDE TRACK AT PRESENT, EMBASSY WILL WATCH CLOSELY.

5. COMSAT REPS EXPECT RETURN LIBERIA EARLY MAY IN HOPES OBTAIN PRELIMINARY COMMITMENT FROM GOL ON JOINT VENTURE. IF THIS OBTAINED, THEY WILL PROBABLY VISIT ABIDJAN AT LATER DATE TO TRY TO ARRANGE AGREEMENT FOR LIBERIA STATION SERVE AS BACKUP FOR IVORY COAST STATION. MAY ALSO LATER TRY TO LINK SIERRA LEONE TO MONROVIA STATION.
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